

Message Text

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46

ACTION SS-25

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 /026 W

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R 270416Z MAR 75

FM AMEMBASSY PHNOM PENH

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 4

INFO AMEMBASSY PARIS

C O N F I D E N T I A L PHNOM PENH 5540

EXDIS

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PINT, CB

SUBJ: CHENG HENG PLANS TO LEAVE

1. FORMER CHIEF OF STATE CHENG HENG (ONE OF THE SEVEN ON THE GRUNK/FUNK DEATH LIST) TOLD US THAT HE PLANS TO LEAVE FOR FRANCE MARCH 28. THE OSTENSIBLE REASON FOR THE VISIT, CHENG HENG SAID, IS A MEDICAL EXAMINATION TO FOLLOW-UP ON TREATMENT GIVEN HIM IN 1974 DURING HIS LAST VISIT. CHENG HENG MADE CLEAR, HOWEVER, THAT HE AND HIS POLITICAL ADVISORS HAVE AGREED THAT CHENG HENG SHOULD LEAVE NOW SO THAT LON NOL CANNOT SUSPECT HIM OF WAITING FOR THE MARSHAL TO LEAVE AND THEN REPLACING LON NOL AS CHIEF OF STATE. MADAME CHENG HENG, WHO IS QUITE ILL, WILL ACCOMPANY HER HUSBAND. LON NOL DID NOT ASK WHETHER CHENG HENG THOUGHT HE SHOULD GO OR STAY. CHENG HENG SAID HE KNEW LON NOL WAS ANXIOUS TO POSE THAT QUESTION, WHICH IS BEING INTENSELY DEBATED AMONG ALL KHMER NOW, AND HE DID NOT BROACH THE SUBJECT EITHER. INSTEAD, HE TOLD LON NOL THAT HE WISHED TO LEAVE FOR MEDICAL REASONS AS SOON AS POSSIBLE. CHENG HENG BELIEVES THAT THE MARSHAL WILL HAVE LESS CAUSE TO STAY IF CHENG HENG LEAVES BECAUSE LON NOL IS WILLING TO ACCEPT SENATE PRESIDENT SAUKHAM KHOY AS ACTING CHIEF OF STATE BUT WOULD BE UNWILLING TO SEE CHENG HENG RESUME THAT FUNCTION. CHENG HENG'S DEPARTURE WILL THEREFORE SET THE MARSHAL'S MIND AT EASE, THUS REMOVING A REASON FOR LONG NOL TO STAY IN CAMBODIA.

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3. CHENG HENG SAID HE WILL STAY IN TOUCH THROUGH FSO

MARK PRATT IN PARIS.

4. COMMENT: CHENG HENG BELIEVES THE MARSHAL'S IMMEDIATE DEPARTURE IS NECESSARY. HE AND HIS ASSOCIATES HAVE HIT ON A CHARACTERISTICALLY KHMER WAY OF GIVING THE MARSHAL THEIR OPINION WITHOUT HAVING TO TELL IT TO HIM DIRECTLY.
DEAN

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NNN

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